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SUBJECT: INDONESIAN PRESIDENT FOCUSES ON CABINET SELECTION

REF: A. JAKARTA 1699

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1451 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting Pol/C Daniel Rochman, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The press is having a field day watching who is coming and going from President Yudhoyono's weekend home as he began interviewing possible cabinet ministers this past weekend. Time is growing short as he plans to announce his cabinet picks immediately after his October 20 inauguration. The two major parties which seemed most likely to be in opposition, Golkar and PDI-P, are set instead to join his coalition and take cabinet positions. As reported reftel, Yudhoyono is enjoying a series of political victories. The question now becomes whether he will appoint a cabinet that will further cement his hold on political power or spend some political capital and select reform-minded technocrats. END SUMMARY.

FOCUSING ON CABINET SELECTION

[1](#)2. (C) With the G-20 behind him, the draft of his first 100 day plans reportedly completed, and the recovery from the earthquake in Padang well underway, President Yudhoyono is focusing on selecting his new cabinet members. Yudhoyono, Vice President-elect Boediono, State Secretary Hatta Rajasa and Cabinet Secretary Sudi Silalahi closeted themselves all day and into the night October 12, poring over candidate bios as the selection process heats up. According to the press, cabinet candidates and their party supporters are bombarding President Yudhoyono's team with text messages campaigning for positions.

KEY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS SET TO JOIN CABINET

[1](#)3. (C) With the election of close ally Aburizal Bakrie (see reftel) as new Golkar Party chief, one of the last significant pieces of the political puzzle fell into place for Yudhoyono. Although Golkar had been allied with traditional opposition party PDI-P against Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat (PD), with Bakrie at the helm, Golkar is now set to join PD's coalition. PDI-P seems likely to follow suit, since PDI-P member Taufik Kiemas (Megawati's husband) was recently elected Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) with PD's support (see reftel). Observers predict Yudhoyono will reward both Golkar and PDI-P with cabinet positions. This would consolidate Yudhoyono's influence over both the legislative and the executive branches of the government.

A REFORM CABINET OR A "POLITICAL" CABINET?

[1](#)4. (C) The most pressing question remains whether Yudhoyono will lean toward a professional cabinet poised to implement reforms, or cater to political party interests.

Most analysts predict that he will fill the most critical positions-- including his economic team--with experienced technocrats. Nonetheless, he may well pay back party support by awarding some ministerial positions to party loyalists. Currently there are 36 members in the cabinet; analysts criticize it as unwieldy and peppered with ineffective and corrupt party loyalists. Many analysts have called for--and seem to expect--a slimmer cabinet.

CABINET TO BE ANNOUNCED AFTER INAUGURATION

15. (C) President Yudhoyono will unveil his new cabinet line up after his October 20 inauguration. With hundreds of candidate names swirling about in the press and parties jostling for positions, cabinet composition remains uncertain. Yudhoyono was re-elected on a clean government campaign platform; the new cabinet picks will reveal whether or not he plans to make good on his campaign promises.
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